

Medicaid has similar broad eligibility, and it too has recorded a similar unexplained drop in its rolls. Some officials have said that while this drop, too, can be attributed partly to the economy, some may also be the result of recipients believing, inaccurately, that once they are removed from welfare rolls, they are also ineligible for Medicaid.

Ms. Watkins said there were indications from states like Wisconsin that some people leaving welfare for low-wage work are not continuing to seek food stamps that could help them make it through the month.

Her misgivings are shared by some members of Congress from both sides of the aisle.

It is becoming apparent that the welfare reforms of 1996 did not anticipate how tightly access to food stamps was linked to access to welfare, said Representative Nancy L. Johnson, Republican of Connecticut and chairwoman of the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Resources.

"We do think there's a problem here," Mrs. Johnson said. "We need to see why state systems don't seem to capture the food-stamp eligible population very well.

"When you make a big change in one system it's going to have ramifications for other systems," Mrs. Johnson said. "Some are positive. If people aren't getting food stamps because they're making more money, that's a good thing."

She said her committee was planning to hold hearings on the matter this year.

So far analysts have been able to gauge only roughly how many eligible people have left the food stamp program even though they need the aid. Last year, for example, the Congressional Budget Office calculated that 2.9 million such people left the food stamp rolls from 1994 to 1997. The budget office report, a projection of economic conditions through 2008, proposed that the rising stigma and barriers surrounding welfare offices could be driving eligible people away.

Whatever the reasons, no one disputes how drastically the program has shrunk, both in the number of people enrolled and in the cost of providing the aid. Since 1994, the cost of the food stamp program has fallen to \$18.9 billion from \$24.5 billion, according to the Agriculture Department.

But some conservative poverty analysts say the drop in food stamp rolls does not indicate a problem. Robert Rector, who studies welfare for the Heritage Foundation, a private group in Washington, said the drop was simply a recovery from a period through the early 1990's when access to food stamps and other assistance became too easy.

"In the late 80's and early 90's you had this notion of one-stop shopping, getting people on as many benefits as you could," Mr. Rector said. "A lot of the decline now is hyped."

He said that Congress would do well to make food stamps less readily available, by instituting work requirements and other rules similar to those already imposed on other forms of assistance.

But Agriculture Department officials are pushing the states to be sure their welfare offices are in line with Federal rules, which require prompt processing of food stamp applications.

On Jan. 29, the administrator of the food stamp program, Samuel Chambers Jr., sent a letter to the commissioners of welfare and food stamp program in every state urging them to review their policies to make sure they do not violate Federal law.

Federal officials had been particularly concerned with the situation in New York City, where newly revamped welfare offices, now called job centers, were delaying food stamp

applications and often directing applicants to private food pantries instead.

After a Federal judge last month ruled that the city food stamp process violated Federal law, the city promised to change its practices.

In recent days, the city made another, unrelated policy change that city officials say will trim several thousand people from food stamp rolls. Under the 1996 package of Federal welfare changes, single able-bodied adults can be cut off from food stamps after three months if they do not work at least 20 hours a week or participate in a workfare program.

Counties can seek waivers to the work requirement if they have high unemployment rates, and for two years the counties in New York City had all sought the waivers, preserving the food aid.

This year, though, the city has chosen not to seek the waivers, so that city residents who are single and able to work must find work or lose their food stamps, said Deborah Sproles, a spokeswoman for the city Human Resources Administration.

Yesterday, private groups focused on poverty issues criticized the city's decision, saying it could put as many as 25,000 people at risk of hunger. But, Ms. Sproles said, "this is part of the city's overall effort to start helping people gain self reliance."●

TRIBUTE TO MRS. SHELBY JEAN ("JEANIE") KIRK

● Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I wish to take this opportunity to recognize and say farewell to an outstanding civil servant, Mrs. Jeanie Kirk, upon her retirement from the Department of the Navy after more than 38 years of dedicated service. Throughout her career, Mrs. Kirk has served with distinction, and it is my privilege to recognize her many accomplishments and to commend her for the superb service she has provided the United States Navy and our nation.

Mrs. Kirk's retirement on 3 May 1999 will bring to a close almost four decades of dedicated service to the United States Navy. From 1960 to 1966, Mrs. Kirk was assigned to the Navy's Personal Affairs Division. From 1966-1968, she was assigned to the Navy's Casualty Branch. For the next 31 years of her service, Mrs. Kirk was a member of the Navy Awards Branch, starting as the Assistant Branch Head in 1968 and becoming the Branch Head in 1978. Throughout her tenure, she has become a well-known and beloved figure among the fleet, from seamen to admirals, among veteran organizations, such as the Congressional Medal of Honor Society, and individuals, such as survivors of the Pearl Harbor attack. She has assisted countless individuals in tracking, reinstating or garnering appropriate awards and recognition for their service to their country, during wartime and during peace. The letters of gratitude and appreciation she has received over the years for her tireless and dogged research on behalf of thousands of sailors and their families and friends would fill many cabinet draw-

ers. Congressmen and women have benefitted from her briefings on the specific details of awards for their constituents and heeded her advice. Her opinion on Navy awards is honored as golden—decisive and accurate—in the halls of Congress as well as the Pentagon.

She is a recognized authority on the topic of Navy awards from the first Congressional Medal of Honor to the most recent new awards, such as the NATO medal, which honors the service of more than 45,000 personnel as peacekeepers in Bosnia. As the Executive Agent for the Department of Defense, she was responsible for inaugurating the Pearl Harbor Commemorative Medal to recognize the 50th Anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Mrs. Kirk has been awarded the Superior Civilian Service and Distinguished Civilian Service Awards. She is a native of Rectortown, Virginia, and currently resides in Middleburg, Virginia.

Mrs. Kirk will retire from the Department of the Navy on May 3, 1999, after thirty-eight years of dedicated service. On behalf of my colleagues, I wish Mrs. Kirk fair winds and following seas. Congratulations on an outstanding career.●

NATIONAL MISSILE DEFENSE

● Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, this bill calls upon the United States to take a momentous step—the deployment of a National Missile Defense system—on the basis of one, and only one criterion: technological feasibility. This bill gives no consideration to the ramifications of deploying such a system on U.S. security, political and diplomatic interests.

It is true that missile technology is proliferating more rapidly than we could have predicted. And this is of grave concern to us all. Certainly, the proliferation of ballistic missile technology constitutes a serious threat to U.S. national security. The question before us is, Will deciding today to deploy a National Missile Defense system—as yet untested, unproven and un-paid for—advance our national security interests? The answer, in my view, is that it will not.

First, I believe this bill will undermine long-term U.S. national security interests, by placing too much emphasis on just one of the many threats we face today.

While the United States is enjoying a period of relative safety and security in world affairs, we must prepare to face a multitude of diverse challenges in the international security environment in coming years. These include: transnational threats, such as terrorism and drug trafficking; the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; and the chaos of failed states, as we have seen in Somalia and the